

MARCH 7, 1978

ASTRONAUTS AS TOURISTS
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: THE U-S SPACE SHUTTLE ENTERPRISE IS SCHEDULED TO ROCKET INTO SPACE FOR ITS FIRST ORBITAL TEST A YEAR FROM NOW. THEN IN JULY 1980, IF ALL GOES WELL, OTHER SHUTTLE CRAFT WILL BEGIN A SERIES OF REGULAR FLIGHTS INTO SPACE. AFTER EACH ORBITAL MISSION THE SHUTTLES WILL RE-ENTER THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE AND GLIDE TO A POWERLESS LANDING ON THE 45-HUNDRED METER LONG MAIN RUNWAY AT EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE IN THE MOJAVE DESERT NORTH OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

THE FUTURE CREWS OF THE SHUTTLE DON'T BEGIN THEIR TRAINING UNTIL MID-JULY BUT ON A RECENT FRIDAY (FEB. 24) THIRTEEN OF THE NEWEST CANDIDATES VISITED THE U-S SPACE AGENCY'S FACILITY AT EDWARDS WHERE THEY GOT THEIR FIRST CLOSE LOOK AT THE CRAFT THAT WILL TAKE THEM INTO SPACE, AND BACK. VOA WEST COAST CORREPPONDENT MATTHEW SCHNEIDER WENT ALONG AND FILED THIS REPORT.

VOICE : THE GROUP LOOKED MORE LIKE TOURISTS THAN FUTURE MEMBERS OF THE ELITE ASTRONAUT CORPS; THEY BROUGHT ALONG MOTHERS AND FATHERS, WIVES -- AND HUSBANDS, CHILDREN AND FRIENDS. AND ALL OF THEM WERE ARMED WITH CAMERAS WHICH CLICKED NON-STOP.

THEY WATCHED TWO NASA FILMS, ATTENDED BRIEFINGS AND TOURED THE SPACE AGENCY'S TEST FACILITY. BUT THE UNQUALIFIED HIGH POINT OF THE DAY WAS THE HOUR THE ASTRONAUT-CANDIDATES SPENT EXAMINING THE 34-METER LONG CRAFT THAT WILL EVENTUALLY CARRY THEM TO THEIR SPACE ADVENTURES.

VOICE: ONE OF THE CANDIDATES IS 32-YEAR OLD ELLISON ONIZUKA
(CONT'D) (O-KNEE-ZOOKA) AN AIR FORCE TEST PILOT BORN IN HAWAII. AS
HIS WIFE AND ONE OF HIS THREE CHILDREN EXCITEDLY EXPLORED
THE HANGAR, CAPTAIN ONIZUKA STOOD UNDER ONE OF THE SHUTTLE'S
DELTA-SHAPED WINGS AND TALKED ABOUT HIS THOUGHTS DURING THE
LONG SELECTION PROCESS:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- ONIZUKA

"FOREMOST IN MY MIND WAS WHAT IT WOULD TAKE FOR ME TO BE
SELECTED. I'M STILL NOT VERY SURE, JUST WHICH QUALIFICATION
I HAD THAT QUALIFIED ME FOR THE PROGRAM. AS THE
SELECTION PROCESS WENT ALONG I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW
COMPETITIVE IT WOULD BE. THEN I RECEIVED THE CALL TO GO
DOWN TO HOUSTON FOR MY PHYSICAL (EXAMINATION) AND INTERVIEW
AND I WAS VERY MUCH ELATED THEN. I WENT THERE AND CAME
AWAY WITH A GOOD FEELING THAT I HAD TRIED MY BEST. AND SO
IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF WAITING AFTER THAT PHYSICAL AND
INTERVIEW PERIOD AND I WAS VERY HAPPY TO GET THE CALL ON THE
SIXTEENTH OF JANUARY INFORMING ME THAT I HAD BEEN SELECTED AS
ONE OF THE (ASTRONAUT) CANDIDATES."

VOICE: O
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T CAPTAIN ONIZUKA, WHO STUDIED AERONAUTICAL ENGINEERING AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, SAYS HE ISN'T SURE WHAT ROLE HE WILL
EVENTUALLY BE ASSIGNED IN THE SHUTTLE PROGRAM, BUT, HE
HOPES TO WORK ON THE SOLAR ENERGY EXPERIMENTS./

ASTRONAUT-CANDIDATE RONALD MCNAIR EXAMINED THE SHUTTLE WITH
THE INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM OF A TEENAGER. THE 28 YEAR OLD
PHYSICIST TOLD VOA THAT HE NEVER APPROACHED NASA AS A "BLACK"
CANDIDATE AND HE WASN'T SELECTED AS A "BLACK" ASTRONAUT.
BUT HE SAYS, "I'M AN ASTRONAUT WHO IS BLACK," AND THAT, HE
BELIEVES, STANDS AS ANOTHER STEP FOR THE PRIDE AND PROGRESS
OF BLACKS IN AMERICA.

DR. MCNAIR, WHO DISPLAYS ALL THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF A CIRCUS
HIGH WIRE ARTIST WHO LAUGHS AT NETS, SAYS ONE OF THE

VOICE: REASONS HE WAS CHOSEN IS HIS RECORD OF SUCCESS AS AN
(CONT'D) EXPERIMENTAL PHYSICIST:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- MCNAIR

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"THE OTHER, I THINK, BUT LESSER PERHAPS, THAT THEY WERE
LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO WERE BROAD, VERSATILE, WHO WERE ABLE
TO ADAPT TO NEW SITUATIONS, WHICH I THINK I FIT THE BILL,
AND ALL THE CRITERIA THE TYPE OF PERSONS THEY WANT, WHO CAN
BE CONGENIAL AND WHO CAN ADAPT TO THE ENVIRONMENT WITH THE
SAME GROUP OF PEOPLE OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME. A NUMBER
OF THINGS, MY BACKGROUND AND MY OVERALL ADAPTABILITY."/

VOICE: THE YOUNG MAN WHO GREW UP IN RURAL LAKE CITY, SOUTH CAROLINA
AND LATER EARNED A DOCTORATE FROM M.I.T. MASSACHUSETTS
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TOLD VOA THAT "HE IS EAGER TO BEGIN
HIS TWO TO THREE YEARS OF ASTRONAUT TRAINING.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- MCNAIR

"I LOOK FORWARD TO THAT, MORE SO THAN ANYTHING ELSE INITALLY.
TO ME, I'M EXCITED BY BEING ABLE TO LEARN THE TYPE OF THING
I'M GOING TO BE TAUGHT, NEW AREAS, NEW SCIENCES. IT'S JUST
A FASCINATING THING, SO I'M GOING TO ENJOY THE COURSE
(CLASSROOM) WORK AS MUCH AS I'M GOING TO ENJOY THE FLYING
AND ALL THE OTHER THINGS THAT COME WITH IT. SO, FROM 'A'
TO 'Z' IT'S EXCITING."

VOICE: STANDING IN THE CAVERNOUS CABIN OF THE BOEING 747 THAT CARRIED
THE SHUTTLE ALOFT FOR ITS AIRBORNE TESTS, 29 YEAR OLD ANNA
FISHER -- A MEDICAL DOCTOR -- TOLD VOA THAT SHE'S DREAMED
OF BEING AN ASTRONAUT SINCE SHE WAS BARELY IN HER TEENS.
DR. FISHER IS AMONG THE FIRST AMERICAN WOMEN CHOSEN TO TRAIN
AS AN ASTRONAUT:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- FISHER

"THE REACTION HAS BEEN VERY PLEASANT. THE THING THAT I
DIDN'T EXPECT SO MUCH WAS THE REACTION I WOULD GET FROM OTHER
WOMEN AND CHILDREN. I'VE RECEIVED LOTS OF LETTERS FROM LITTLE
GIRLS, I'VE GIVEN MY FIRST PUBLIC TALK, AND AFTERWARDS WOMEN
CAME UP AND TALKED TO ME, AND THEY'RE ALL THRILLED. AND
THEY ALL ASKED FOR AUTOGRAPHS FOR THEIR LITTLE GIRLS SO THAT
THEY CAN SAY THAT THEY CAN DO THAT TOO. AND IT WAS SOMETHING

TAPE : THAT I DIDN'T EXPECT AND IT'S BEEN A VERY PLEASANT, REWARDING,
(CONT'D) SURPRISE."

VOICE: DR. FISHER AND HER HUSBAND, WHO IS ALSO A PHYSICIAN,
WITNESSED THE SECOND FREE FLIGHT OF THE ENTERPRISE. SHE
REMEMBERS HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO SUPPRESS HER EXCITEMENT:

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- FISHER

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"THAT WAS AFTER I HAD COME TO HOUSTON FOR MY INTERVIEWS
AND IT WAS A TIME WHEN I WAS WAITING TO FIND OUT. AND
I WAS TRYING NOT TO GET TOO EXCITED BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT
TO GET MY EXPECTATIONS THAT HIGH. BUT IT WAS HARD. THE
MOMENT YOU SAW IT (THE SHUTTLE) TAKING OFF AND REALIZED THAT
THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT I WOULD BE A PART OF THAT, THAT
ALONG WITH GOING DOWN TO HOUSTON IN THE FIRST PLACE REALLY
TRIGGERED MY DESIRE MORE THAN I WANTED IT TRIGGERED SINCE
I DIDN'T KNOW IF I WOULD BE ACCEPTED OR NOT."/

VOICE: AT THE END OF THEIR RECENT TOUR, SEVERAL OF THE ASTRONAUT
CANDIDATES NOTED THAT THEY HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO FORGE
STRONG BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH EACH OTHER -- AND THAT THEY
EXPECTED THAT WOULD HELP THEM ALL GET THROUGH THE NEXT
YEARS OF INTENSE TRAINING.

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BML/RCS